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29 September 1952

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director of Training  
SUBJECT : Comment on Summer Seminar Program

The following remarks, with attachment, summarize observations on the two series of lectures on the USSR and Southeast Asia conducted within the Agency during July and August, 1952, and suggest recommendations for possible future guidance.

Approximately 80 Agency employees participated to some degree, about 50 in the USSR series and about 30 in the SEA series. Of these, perhaps slightly over half in each instance attended most lectures in the selected series; the remaining individuals attended irregularly. The following comments are based upon written and oral remarks submitted by thirty-five students and on conferences between OTR staff and faculty of both series. The attachment here-with, prepared by [redacted] group, summarizes student comment.

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Both faculty and students have generally commended the concept of OTR's conduct of area programs within the Agency, and most persons would like to see the concept developed in the form of future programs. The basic weakness felt by both faculty and students was the lack of correlation between content of the lectures and specific interests of the students. In my opinion this resulted from the facts that: (a) the instructors were given no advanced guidance on subject matter or interests of the students, and (b) students represented a wide diversity of substantive background (ranging from the advanced specialist to the curious who attended for purely cultural reasons). The result was that the instructors, quite naturally, endeavored to cover the broad subjects in general terms, gambling that this median approach would make the greatest contribution to the greatest number of persons.

In my opinion, experience of these two lecture series leads to the following conclusions:

1. Intra-Agency area programs will make a definite contribution to development of Agency personnel. It is my opinion, however, that the lecture series technique is not the most effective method. This is particularly true where the approach is general, and where no participation other than attendance is expected of students. Future area programs, I feel, should be organized within the framework of the Intelligence School.
2. Programs should be fashioned for, and directed at specific groups with identified problems and definite objectives. They should not be general, aimed at satisfying all people in all ways.

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3. Participation in any program should include expectation to contribute to the program through outside reading, participation in discussion and preparation of seminar papers. These programs should be conducted primarily for persons interested in intellectual development, and willing to participate positively, as distinct from passively.

4. Concern should be given to hours, frequency, and physical surroundings as factors that affect student participation.

In summary, the summer program has demonstrated, I believe, the usefulness for, and interest in area studies conducted within the Agency. This experience does suggest, however, that more effective ways of developing area programs may be devised. Consequently, my own inclination is to recommend development of limited area programs and that these be cast within the administrative framework of the Intelligence School and conducted according to general academic procedures involving careful planning of the program to meet identified needs, and involving student participation in the form of reading, discussion and preparation of research papers. Answering the assertion that we cannot require positive participation of people who work a full day, I should reply that our program is designed only for persons concerned enough with self-improvement to pay a limited price in the form of positive participation.

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Chief, Programs DIVISION

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